

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
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AMEMBASSY BERLIN
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AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USBERLIN
USLO PEKING

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PRAGUE 2239

E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: ANNIVERSARY PASSES QUIETLY

REF: PRAGUE 2217

1. AS OF NOON AUGUST 21 ANNIVERSARY OF WP INTERVENTION HAD
PASSED WITHOUT COMMOTION OR ANY SORT OF DEMONSTRATION OF PROTEST.
BEAUTIFUL WEATHER ON SUNDAY HAD EVERY PRAGUE RESIDENT WITH MEANS
TO TRANSPORTATION OUT IN COUNTRY. POLICE WERE MORE NUMEROUS
THAN UNUAL DOWNTOWN AND IN CERTAIN OTHER AREAS, BUT WERE NOT IN
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MASSIVE NUMBERS. ON AUGUST 20, AMBASSADOR OBSERVED
AN INTERNAL MILITARY TRUCK EQUIPPED WITH WHAT APPEARED TO BE
COMMUNICATIONS GEAR ON SOVIET EMBASSY GROUNDS, AND
SOVIET AMBASSADOR'S CAR HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY TWO POLICE
ESCORT VEHICLES IN RECENT DAYS. TOWARD THE END OF
LAST WEEK, AN ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER WITH POLICE
ESCORT CARS DROVE THROUGH PARTS OF DOWNTOWN --

APPARENTLY TO INTIMIDATE POTENTIAL TROUBLE-MAKERS. ON AUGUST 21, EMBOFF ALSO SAW TWO ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS PARKED BEHOND PRAGUE CENTRAL POLICE HEADQUARTERS. OTHERWISE, LITTLE MILITARY ACTIVITY WAS VISIBLE. AS BBC HAS NOTED, RUMORED PROTESTS SUCH AS BOYCOTTING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, TURNING ON CAR HEADLIGHTS OR WEARING OF MOURNING SYMBOLS SIMPLY DID NOT OCCUR TO ANY DETECTABLE EXTENT.

2. REGIME WAS CONSISTENT WITH EARLIER POLICY OF FACING ANNIVERSARY SQUARELY AND PROCLAIMING INTEVENTION AS VITAL TO PREVENT COUNTERREVOLUTION. PARRY DAILY RUDE PRAVO AND BRATISLAVA PRAVDA AUGUST 21 CARRIED IDENTICAL EDITORIALS COVERING WELL OVER HALF A PAGE EXALTING THE INTERVENTION, TIES WITH USSR AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GAINS MADE SINCE 1969. OTHER MONDAY PAPERS IGNORED NNIVERSARY. RUDE PRAVO AND PRAVDA FOR AUGUST 19 AND 21 WERE MORE THAN USUALLY RICH IN ANTI-WESTERN ITEMS, INCLUDING ACCUSATIONS THAT SUCH EMIGRE DISSIDENTS AS PELIKAN, MLYNAR, GOLDSTUECKER AND LIEHM ARE U.S. PUPPETS IN ANTI-CZECHOSLOVAK, ANTI-SOVIET CAMPAIGN.

3. ONE INTERESTING FACET OF OTHERWISE RATHER UNEVENTFUL ANNIVERSARY HERE IS THAT REGIME GAINED ENOUGH CONFIDENCE IN RECENT DAYS TO ALLOW SOME WESTERN JOURNALISTS IN TO COVER IT. PRAGUE-ACCREDITED CORRESPONDENTS FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TIME AND REUTERS ARE HERE AND NYTIMES CORRESPONDENT WOULD HAVE BEEN EXCEPT THAT TIMES DID NOT WANT TO KEEP HIM HERE DURING NEWSPAPER STRIKE. BBC CORRESPONDENT ALSO TURNED UP AND COX NEWSPAPERS WASHINGTON-BASED JOURNALIST WAS ABLE TO HAVE VISA REFUSAL REVERSED AT CSSR CONSULATE IN VIENNA. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE LEARNED THAT VISITING BELGIAN EDITOR IN CHIEF OF "BELANG VAN LINBURG", HUGO CAMPS, HAS BEEN EXPELLED FROM THE COUNTRY EARLIER THIS MONTH AFTER A 10-HOUR QUESTIONING AND TWO-DAY DETENTION FOLLOWING HIS MEETING WITH CZECH DISSIDENTS, INCLUDING JIRI HAJAK.

4. ANNIVERSARY HAS BEEN A NOTABLY GOOD TIME FOR FOOD SHOPPERS IN PRAGUE. AT LEAST IN SOME STORES FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES ABOUND AND MEAT DISPLAYS ARE FULL OF GOOD-LOOKING CUTS. COMBINED WITH VACATION EXODUS THESE ABUNDANT SUPPLIES HAVE CREATED UNUSUAL SITUATION OF NO LINES OUTSIDE SHOPS - EXCEPT AT ICE CREAM COUNTERS. ENOUGH TO MAKE NUMEROUS POLISH TOURISTS EAT THEIR HEARTS OUT.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH REGIME WILL CONGRATULATE ITSELF ON BRINGING OFF AN EVENTLESS ANNIVERSARY, GREAT PLAY

GIVEN TO ANNIVERSARY IN WEST WILL ONLY CONTRIBUTE TO
EXISTING PARANOIA AND FRUSTRATION. END COMMENT.

6. DECONTROL 4 YEARS FROM ORIGINATING DATE.
BYRNE

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